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 RUEHJA/AMEMBASSY JAKARTA 6468
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TAGS: MOPS, PREL, CB, TH

SUBJECT: THAI ATTITUDES ON AID TO THE KHMER RESISTANCE

REF: (A) BANGKOK 05932 (NOTAL), (B) FBIS BK 140318Z, (C)
 FBIS BK 140922Z, [REDACTED] (E) JAKARTA 2825 (NOTAL),
 (F) 34 BANGKOK 15422 (NOTAL)

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1. (SECRET -- ENTIRE TEXT).

2. SUMMARY. THIS YEAR'S HEAVY VIETNAMESE DRY SEASON
CAMPAIGN ON THE THAI/CAMBODIAN BORDER HAS INCREASED THE
BURDEN OF THE KHMER RESISTANCE ON THAILAND AND
CONSEQUENTLY HEIGHTENED THAI AWARENESS OF THE RISKS
INVOLVED IN SUPPORT FOR THE RESISTANCE. THAI PRESS
 REACTION TO THE ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS' APPEAL FOR
 MILITARY AID TO THE RESISTANCE HAS BEEN TO A LARGE
 EXTENT NEGATIVE BECAUSE OF THE POTENTIAL RISK OF A
 DIRECT CONFRONTATION WITH VIETNAM. SOME POLITICAL
 LEADERS, BOTH IN THE GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION, ARE
 QUESTIONING WHAT THEY PERCEIVE AS A LACK OF SUCCESS IN
 THE THAI GOVERNMENT'S CAMBODIA POLICY, AND THERE IS
 CONCERN WITHIN THE RTG OVER INCREASING VIOLENT CRIME
 COMMITTED BY KHMER RESISTANCE TROOPS INSIDE THAILAND AND
 THE DISLOCATION OF THAI VILLAGERS. THESE FACTORS HAVE
 CAUSED A NEW MOOD OF ANXIETY WHICH IS REFLECTED ON THE
 ONE HAND IN A FEW CALLS FOR DEALING WITH VIETNAM, AND ON
 THE OTHER FOR GREATER INTERNATIONAL, PARTICULARLY US,
 INVOLVEMENT AND ASSISTANCE. NEVERTHELESS, THE FOREIGN
 MINISTER AND OTHER KEY POLICY MAKERS ARE HOLDING THEIR
 COURSE, AND PRIME MINISTER PREM IS CONTINUING TO BACK
 THE FOREIGN MINISTER.

3. UP TO THIS TIME THERE HAD BEEN ALMOST NO PUBLIC AND
LITTLE PRIVATE DISCUSSION OF CAMBODIA POLICY, AND THE
RTG HAS HAD FEW CRITICS FOR ITS HANDLING OF CAMBODIA,
WITH THE EXCEPTIONS OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER KRIANGSAK

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AND PROFESSOR SUKHUMPHAN BORIPHAT. AS A RESULT, THE POLICY, AND THE EXTENT OF THAI INVOLVEMENT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ARE NOT WELL KNOWN, EVEN WITHIN THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP. THE LACK OF A CLEARLY ARTICULATED POLICY HAS EXACERBATED PROBLEMS OF COORDINATION AMONG THE VARIOUS RTG ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED ON THE BORDER. THE OVERALL REACTION TO DRY SEASON DEVELOPMENTS HAS BEEN ONE OF CONCERN THAT INDICATES THAT THERE IS LITTLE POPULAR ENTHUSIASM FOR THAI INVOLVEMENT WITH THE RESISTANCE. ON THE OTHER HAND, A VISCERAL FEELING ABOUT THE VIETNAMESE THREAT HAS THE EFFECT OF GENERALLY SUPPORTING THAI ACTIONS. ON BALANCE WE SEE THIS LACK OF STRONG POPULAR SUPPORT AS POSING LITTLE IMMEDIATE THREAT TO THE RTG'S CAMBODIA POLICY. HOWEVER, IN THE LONGER RUN, AND IF THE EXTENT OF THE THAI ROLE BECOMES A MATTER OF POLITICAL DEBATE, THE RTG MAY HAVE A DIFFICULT TASK IN MAINTAINING SUPPORT FOR ITS ACTIVIST POLICY. END SUMMARY.

4. AS A RESULT OF VIETNAM'S 1984-85 DRY SEASON CAMPAIGN, THE BELT OF CAMBODIAN RESISTANCE CAMPS WHICH FORMED A BUFFER OF SORTS ALONG THE THAI/CAMBODIAN BORDER HAS BEEN ELIMINATED, AND MORE THAN 240,000 KHMER CIVILIANS ARE IN THAILAND FOR AN INDEFINITE PERIOD. THE VIETNAMESE ARMY (PAVN) HAS DEMONSTRATED THE WILL AND ABILITY TO KEEP TROOPS ON THAI SOIL FOR EXTENDED PERIODS OF TIME, IN SPITE OF DIFFIDENT THAI ATTEMPTS TO EXPEL THEM. THE COSTS TO THE RTA OF THIS YEAR'S CAMPAIGN IN TERMS OF CASUALTIES, LOST AIRCRAFT AND OTHER EQUIPMENT, MONEY AND PRESTIGE HAVE BEEN CONSIDERABLE. THAI CIVILIAN LOSSES FROM VIETNAMESE SHELLING HAVE BEEN PUBLICIZED IN THE PRESS. THE VIETNAMESE AND PRK ARMIES, SUPPORTED BY CAMBODIAN CIVILIANS, ARE CONSTRUCTING STRONGPOINTS, OBSTACLES AND A LOGISTICS INFRASTRUCTURE IMMEDIATELY ADJACENT TO THE THAI BORDER. THIS WILL PROBABLY RESULT IN AN INCREASED THAI MILITARY PRESENCE ON THE BORDER, MORE FREQUENT CLASHES WITH THE PAVN, AND AT LEAST THE PERCEPTION OF AN INCREASED THREAT TO THAILAND. FINALLY, THE ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS' CALL FOR INCREASED MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO THE RESISTANCE HAS BROUGHT THAILAND'S CONFRONTATION WITH VIETNAM INTO THE OPEN AND STIMULATED PUBLIC COMMENT ON POSSIBLE THAI

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MILITARY AID TO THE RESISTANCE. THE IMMEDIATE THAI REACTION HAS BEEN A MOOD OF CONCERN, AND A CASTING ABOUT FOR WAYS TO DEAL WITH THE SITUATION. IN THE LONGER RUN, IF CAMBODIA EMERGES AS AN INTERNAL POLITICAL ISSUE IT WOULD HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO SUSTAIN ITS POLICY OVER THE LONG HAUL. THUS IT MAY BE WORTHWHILE TO ASSESS THE ATTITUDES TOWARD CURRENT RTG POLICY.

5. THE DE PUTY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION THAI NATION PARTY, CHATCHAI CHUNAWAN, ALBEIT AN OPPORTUNIST IN SEARCH OF AN ISSUE, HAS ALREADY TOLD US THAT HE IS CONSIDERING RECOMMENDING THAT HIS PARTY SPLIT WITH THE PREM GOVERNMENT OVER THE RTG'S CAMBODIA POLICY (REF A). FORMER PRIME MINISTER KRIANGSAK CHAMANAN HAS RECENTLY REPEATED HIS WARNINGS ABOUT THE DANGER OF OVERT INVOLVEMENT IN THE MILITARY ASPECTS OF THE CONFLICT, CITING AMONG OTHER THINGS THE ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF A CONFRONTATION WITH VIETNAM (REF B). FOLLOWING THE ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS' APPEAL FOR AID TO THE RESISTANCE, THERE WAS A SPATE OF EDITORIALS CRITICAL OF THE IDEA, WHICH WAS SEEN AS DRAWING THAILAND INTO THE REGIONAL CONFLICT, INCREASING THE REFUGEE BURDEN, AND RISKING VIETNAMESE RETALIATION AGAINST THAILAND. THIS HAS BEEN BALANCED BY A NUMBER OF EDITORIALS MAKING THE POINT THAT THAILAND AND ASEAN CANNOT AFFORD TO GIVE IN TO VIETNAM OVER CAMBODIA. THAI OFFICIALS HAVE ALSO BECOME CONSCIOUS OF DEATHS OF THAI VILLAGERS, AND THE COSTS OF THE DISLOCATION OF VILLAGES ALONG THE BORDER. ON FEBRUARY 14 FOREIGN MINISTER SITTHI RESPONDED TO THESE EXPRESSIONS OF WORRY WHEN HE TOLD THE PRESS THAT THE THAI WOULD "NOT ENGAGE OURSELVES IN MILITARY ACTION, UNLESS THIS IS NEEDED TO DEFEND OUR COUNTRY ON OUR OWN TERRITORY" (REF C). THERE HAS ALSO BEEN A BELATED ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF A SERIOUS PROBLEM OF LAWLESSNESS AND BANDITRY ALONG THE CAMBODIAN BORDER ASSOCIATED WITH THE PRESENCE OF REFUGEES AND ARMED KHMER IN THAILAND.

6. ONE NOTABLE ASPECT OF RTG CAMBODIA POLICY HISTORICALLY IS THAT IT HAS BEEN FORMULATED AND CARRIED OUT WITH VERY LITTLE PUBLIC OR PRIVATE DEBATE, OR

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CONSIDERATION OF POLICY ALTERNATIVES. (IN CONTRAST, THE POSSIBLE PURCHASE OF F-16S HAS BEEN DISCUSSED EXTENSIVELY IN THE MEDIA BY A CROSS SECTION OF OPINION MAKERS). CAMBODIA IS GENERALLY TREATED AS A PROBLEM BETWEEN THE KHMER AND THE VIETNAMESE, WITH THAILAND PLAYING A SUPPORTING DIPLOMATIC ROLE IN THE UV AND ELSEWHERE, AS WELL AS PROVIDING HUMANITARIAN SUPPORT FOR KHMER REFUGEES. THE THAI LANGUAGE PRESS IN PARTICULAR HAS DOWNPLAYED EVENTS IN CAMBODIA. THE ENGLISH PRESS TREATS RESISTANCE ACTIVITIES AS IMPORTANT STORIES, REPORTING IN SOME DETAIL ON THE CGOK FACTIONS AND CONDITIONS IN CAMBODIA, WHILE REFRAINING FROM MENTIONING DIRECT RVG INVOLVEMENT. IN CONTRAST, THE THAI PRESS TREATS THE VIETNAMESE OCCUPATION OF CAMBODIA AND THE KHMER RESISTANCE AS A SUBJECT OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE TO THAILAND EXCEPT INsofar AS PROBLEMS SPILL OVER THE BORDER. [REDACTED] HAS TOLD US THAT THE THAI LANGUAGE PAPERS COVER CAMBODIA AND THE BORDER WITH THEIR CRIME REPORTERS, SINCE THE STORIES INVOLVE KILLING. THIS TREATMENT IS THE RESULT NOT ONLY OF A GOVERNMENT POLICY OF SECRECY, BUT A TACIT MEDIA CONSENSUS THAT MOST THAI ARE NOT PARTICULARLY CONCERNED WITH WHAT IS GOING ON INSIDE CAMBODIA, AND AS LONG AS THAI SOIL IS PROTECTED AND THE KHMER REMAIN FOR THE MOST PART ACROSS THE BORDER, CAMBODIA WAS A PROBLEM TO BE HANDLED BY SOMEONE ELSE.

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7. THERE IS A GENERAL PERCEPTION IN THAILAND THAT VIETNAM IS A THREAT; IN A DECEMBER 1984 ATTITUDE SURVEY PREPARED FOR USIS, 63 PERCENT OF THOSE POLLED SAID THAT VIETNAM POSED A MILITARY THREAT TO THAILAND. FOURTEEN PERCENT OF PEOPLE POLLED BELIEVED THAT THAILAND IS VERY LIKELY TO BE ATTACKED (BY VIETNAM, LAOS OR CAMBODIA), AND 33 PERCENT RESPONDED THAT IT WAS FAIRLY LIKELY. POLITICAL LEADERS AND THE MEDIA ARE UNIFORMLY CRITICAL OF VIETNAM FOR ITS OCCUPATION OF CAMBODIA, INCURSIONS INTO THAILAND, AND CAUSING THE REFUGEE PROBLEM. HOWEVER, THIS DOES NOT TRANSLATE INTO A POPULAR DESIRE FOR OPPOSITION TO VIETNAM, AND PERHAPS NOT EVEN INTO STRONG SUPPORT FOR AN ACTIVIST CAMBODIAN POLICY. IN THE SAME SURVEY, 34 PERCENT LISTED THE ECONOMY AS THAILAND'S

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MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM WHILE ONLY 16 PERCENT NAMED BORDER PROBLEMS AND COMMUNISM. ONE QUICK THAI REACTION TO THE NEW BORDER SITUATION HAS BEEN TO LOOK TO THEIR FRIENDS TO TAKE CARE OF VIETNAM FOR THEM, ESPECIALLY THE US. A FEBRUARY 16 EDITORIAL IN THE INFLUENTIAL THAI DAILY "SIAM RAI" STATED THAT THE ASEAN COMMUNIQUE ONLY CALLED ON THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO INCREASE POLITICAL AND MILITARY SUPPORT FOR THE RESISTANCE, BUT DID NOT MEAN THAT ASEAN MUST ALSO GIVE MILITARY AID. THE EDITORIAL CONCLUDED, "IT WILL BE UNUSUAL AND SHAMEFUL IF THE WORLD COMMUNITY, PARTICULARLY THE US WHO IS THE FREE WORLD'S LEADER, WOULD STAY PUT AND ALLOW THE REGIONAL 'GANGSTER' TO ABSORB THE KAMPUCHEAN RACE BEFORE THEIR EYES."

8. ALTHOUGH GENERALLY AWARE OF THAI INVOLVEMENT IN CAMBODIA, MOST THAI POLITICAL LEADERS HAVE SHOWN LITTLE INCLINATION TO EXAMINE BASIC ASSUMPTIONS, TO KEEP INFORMED ON DETAILS OR TO CONSIDER ALTERNATIVE POLICIES. THAI PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR THE MOST PART SEEM UNINTERESTED IN CAMBODIAN POLICY. THE ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS' CALL FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO THE RESISTANCE AND FOREIGN MINISTER SITTHI'S JUSTIFICATION FOR MILITARY AID, HOWEVER, SEEMS TO BE DRAWING ADDITIONAL THAI POLITICAL LEADERS INTO THE POLICY DEBATE. SENIOR RTG OFFICIALS [REDACTED] HAVE RAISED THAI INVOLVEMENT, EXPRESSING CONCERN OVER THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COSTS AND THE DANGERS OF A CONFRONTATION WITH VIETNAM [REDACTED]

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9. THE MOST SIGNIFICANT QUESTIONING WITHIN THE RTG HAS COME FROM INTERIOR MINISTER SITTHI CHAIRAROT. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] SITTHI REPORTED ON A RECENT FACT-FINDING TRIP HE HAD CONDUCTED ALONG THE THAI/CAMBODIAN BORDER. HE REPORTEDLY SAID THAT THE SITUATION FROM PRACHIN BURI TO TRAT PROVINCES WAS EXTREMELY UNSTABLE. HE COMMENTED

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THAT CAMBODIAN REFUGEES ARE ENTERING THAILAND IN INCREASING NUMBERS AND ARE COMMITTING SERIOUS CRIMES AGAINST THAI CIVILIANS ON THE BORDER, INCLUDING ROBBERY AND RAPE. SITTHI RECOMMENDED THAT CAMBODIANS CAUGHT BREAKING THE LAW BE PUNISHED IMMEDIATELY. WE HAVE HEARD FROM OTHER SOURCES THAT THE INTERIOR MINISTER IS UPSET AT THE DETERIORATION OF LAW AND ORDER ALONG THE BORDER. (A SPECIAL MILITARY-POLICE TASK FORCE AGAINST BORDER CRIME WAS FORMED IN 1984). AS MENTIONED ABOVE, THE PRESS HAS BEEN REPORTING THE INCREASED CRIME ALONG THE BORDER, BUT HAS BEEN RESTRAINED IN REPORTING THE SUSPECTED IDENTITIES OF THE PERPETRATORS. PRESS REPORTS USUALLY REFER TO "FOREIGN INTRUDERS," LEAVING THE CASUAL READER TO THINK THAT THE CRIMES MAY HAVE BEEN COMMITTED BY HENG SAMRIN OR VIETNAMESE SOLDIERS OR BANDIT GANGS RATHER THAN TROOPS OF THE KHMER RESISTANCE.

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10. UP UNTIL NOW A SMALL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS HAVE MONOPOLIZED THE FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RTG'S CAMBODIA STRATEGY -- FOREIGN MINISTER SITTHI, ARMY DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF LT. GENERAL CHAWALIT YONGCHAIYUL, NSC HEAD PRASONG SUNSIRI, CHIEF OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE PHIA CHAKAPHAN AND THEIR CLOSE ASSOCIATES. WITHIN THIS GROUP THERE SEEMS TO BE A CONSENSUS ON STRATEGY AND DETERMINATION TO STAY THE COURSE. POSSIBLY IN ORDER TO AVOID DIVISIVE DEBATE ON CAMBODIA, AND ALSO TO PRESERVE THE FIG LEAF OF NON-INVOLVEMENT, THESE KEY PLAYERS HAVE NOT PUBLICLY ARTICULATED THEIR STRATEGY OR EVEN ATTEMPTED TO EXPLAIN IT TO THE REST OF THE GOVERNMENT OR THE BROADER FOREIGN POLICY ESTABLISHMENT. (THIS CONTRASTS WITH THE EXTENSIVE DEBATE ON CAMBODIA BETWEEN ASEAN SPECIALISTS). THUS WHILE THERE IS AGREEMENT ON FUNDAMENTAL POLICY AMONG THE SMALL CIRCLE OF RTG DECISION MAKERS, AND WITH OTHER ASEAN GOVERNMENTS, A BROADER POPULAR CONSENSUS AMONG THAI, OR EVEN UNDERSTANDING OF THE STRATEGY, IS LACKING. THIS HAS GIVEN THE KEY PLAYERS A FREE HAND TO IMPLEMENT THE COVERT ASPECTS OF THEIR STRATEGY. HOWEVER, AS THE EXTENT AND COST OF THAI INVOLVEMENT BECOMES MORE OBVIOUS THIS LACK OF PUBLIC DISCUSSION AND CONSENSUS COULD RESULT IN A DIVERGENCE OF VIEWS AND OPPOSITION TO THE

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POLICY.

11. THE RIG'S CAMBODIA STRATEGY HAS EVOLVED SINCE 1979 AS A SERIES OF AD HOC RESPONSES TO EVENTS, WITH LITTLE ARTICULATION OF BASIC ASSUMPTIONS WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT, THERE ARE THUS SOME DIFFERENCES IN INTERPRETATION AND SUBSTANTIAL PROBLEMS OF COORDINATION BETWEEN VARIOUS RIG AGENCIES. (COORDINATION BETWEEN THE ARMY AND THE FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS IMPROVED GREATLY IN RECENT YEARS BUT STILL HAS A LONG WAY TO GO, AS DEMONSTRATED BY THE FIASCO OVER THE THREE VILLAGES ON THE THAI/LAO BORDER). IN THIS RESPECT THERE MAY BE SOME BASIS FOR JOSUF NAWANDI'S CONTENTION THAT THE THAI ARE DIVIDED ON CAMBODIA (REF E). HOWEVER, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THESE DIFFERENCES REPRESENT ALTERNATIVE POLICIES, BUT RATHER A GENERAL FUZZINESS OF THINKING BY SOME OF THE PLAYERS AND ARE SYMPTOMS OF THE MOOD OF CONCERN. LT. GENERAL CHANALIT YONGCHAIYUT IS THE PRIMARY MILITARY PLAYER ON CAMBODIA. CHANALIT HAS A GOOD GRASP OF THE COMBINED POLITICAL-MILITARY NATURE OF THE STRATEGY, ALTHOUGH HE IS INCLINED TO BE OVERLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE MILITARY POTENTIAL OF THE RESISTANCE. BELOW CHANALIT, HOWEVER, THERE IS A DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITY WITHIN THE RIA BETWEEN THE REGULAR FIELD COMMANDERS RESPONSIBLE FOR PROTECTING THE THAI BORDER AND THE SPECIAL TASK FORCES WORKING WITH THE VARIOUS RESISTANCE GROUPS. FOR MANY OFFICERS IN THE REGULAR ARMY THE KMER RESISTANCE IS AN UNWANTED PROBLEM RATHER THAN A FOREIGN POLICY TOOL. UNFORTUNATELY, SUPREME COMMANDER GENERAL ATHIT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN TOO PREOCCUPIED WITH DOMESTIC POLITICS AND OTHER QUESTIONS TO PLAY A POLICY ROLE. IN GENERAL HIS HANDLING OF BORDER PROBLEMS HAS BEEN DICTATED BY INTERNAL PUBLIC RELATIONS CONCERNS RATHER THAN BY STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS. IN ADDITION, SOME OF THE COVERT TASK FORCES WORKING ON THE BORDER HAVE DEVELOPED THEIR OWN INDIVIDUAL BUREAUCRATIC OBJECTIVES WHICH SOMETIMES ARE IN CONFLICT WITH OVERALL POLICY. FOR EXAMPLE, COVERT SUPPORT FOR LAO AND VIETNAMESE RESISTANCE GROUPS TENDS TO UNDERMINE THE THAI AND ASEAN POSITION THAT IT IS INTERESTED IN SELF DETERMINATION FOR CAMBODIA RATHER THAN A GENERALIZED ATTACK ON COMMUNIST

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VIETNAM.

12. QUESTIONING OF RTG CAMBODIAN POLICY IS NOT NEW IN THAILAND, BUT IT HAS NOT BEEN WIDESPREAD, NOR HAVE CRITICS ADVANCED MUCH IN THE WAY OF REASONABLE POLICY ALTERNATIVES. NEVERTHELESS, THEIR ARGUMENTS MAY BECOME MORE IMPORTANT IF CAMBODIA BECOMES AN INTERNAL POLITICAL ISSUE. THE TWO MOST SERIOUS AND OUTSPOKEN CRITICS OF THE GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN FORMER PRIME MINISTER AND GENERAL KRIANGSAK CHAMANAN AND CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR SUKHUMPHAN BORIPHAT. KRIANGSAK HAS FOR SOME TIME ARGUED THAT THE ORIGINAL CAMBODIA POLICY DEVELOPED WHEN HE WAS STILL PRIME MINISTER CALLED ONLY FOR LOW PROFILE, COVERT SUPPORT FOR THE RESISTANCE IN SUPPORT OF DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS. HE CONTENDS THAT THIS LOW RISK POLICY HAS GOTTEN OUT OF CONTROL. KRIANGSAK ASSERTED IN MARCH, 1984, THAT THAI OBJECTIVES ARE LIMITED, AND THAT IT IS UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT TO ELIMINATE VIETNAMESE INFLUENCE FROM CAMBODIA (REF F). SUBSEQUENTLY HE HAS ARGUED THAT WITH THE RESISTANCE PERHAPS AT ITS PEAK IT MIGHT BE TIME TO TRY TO CUT A DEAL WITH HANOI. AS NOTED ABOVE, HE HAS LATELY REPEATED HIS WARNING ABOUT THE DANGERS OF AN INCREASINGLY OPEN AND DIRECT CONFRONTATION WITH VIETNAM. KRIANGSAK IS PROBABLY MOTIVATED IN PART BY A DESIRE TO STAKE OUT FOR HIMSELF AND FOR HIS FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE AT LEAST A MINIMAL FOREIGN POLICY ROLE. HOWEVER, HE SEEMS GENUINELY WORRIED THAT THAILAND IS IN OVER ITS HEAD.

13. ✓ PROFESSOR SUKHUMPHAN'S CRITICISM OF RTG POLICY IS BASED TO A GREAT EXTENT ON WHAT HE SEES AS UNFAVORABLE IMPLICATIONS FOR THAI INTERNAL POLITICS RESULTING FROM POLARIZATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIA. SUKHUMPHAN MADE HIS CASE MOST RECENTLY IN A PAPER GIVEN IN JANUARY AT THE US-ASEAN CONFERENCE AT CHIANG MAI. HE CONTENDS THAT POLARIZATION, WITH COMMUNIST INDOCHINA ON THE ONE HAND AND ASEAN ON THE OTHER, MAY LEAD TO THE REMILITARIZATION OF THE THAI POLITICAL SYSTEM, REVERSING THE TREND TO GREATER PLURALISM AND SOCIAL COMPLEXITY, IN THE END DAMAGING THAI NATIONAL SECURITY. SUKHUMPHAN'S PROPOSED SOLUTION TO REVERSE THE TREND TOWARD POLARIZATION WOULD INCLUDE ACCEPTANCE IN THE SHORT AND MEDIUM TERM OF

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VIETNAM'S "PREDOMINANT INFLUENCE OVER, BUT NOT MILITARY OCCUPATION OF, LAOS AND KAMPUCHEA," AS WELL AS ESTABLISHING A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION INCLUDING THE KPNLF AND SIHANOUKISTS, BUT EXCLUDING A DISBANDED KHMER ROUGE. HE ALSO WOULD ACCEPT OVER THE SHORT AND MEDIUM TERM THE EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN REGIONAL STATES AND GREAT POWERS, "WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE PRC-KHMER ROUGE CONNECTION." THESE REACTIONS TO THE NEW SITUATION ARE THE OBVERSE TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S TOUGHER LINE AND TO CALLS FOR GREATER INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT.

14. ✓ IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT THE REACTION TO SUKHUMPHAN'S PROPOSALS AT THE CHIANG MAI CONFERENCE WAS OVERWHELMINGLY NEGATIVE, FROM BOTH THAI AND OTHER ASEAN AS WELL AS US PARTICIPANTS. WHILE THERE WAS AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF MANY OF THE DANGERS HE HAD CITED AS STEMMING FROM CONTINUED CONFRONTATION BETWEEN ASEAN AND VIETNAM, THERE WAS ALMOST UNIVERSAL DISAGREEMENT WITH HIS ALTERNATIVE, WHICH MOST PARTICIPANTS SAW AS IN EFFECT GIVING IN TO VIETNAM. ALMOST ALL PARTICIPANTS BELIEVED THAT SUCH A SOLUTION WOULD POSE EVEN GREATER RISKS TO THAILAND THAN ITS PRESENT COURSE, IN SPITE OF ITS RISKS AND REMOTENESS OF A FINAL SOLUTION. AS ONE PARTICIPANT NOTED, "ONE DOES NOT GET RID OF A HUNGRY TIGER BY FEEDING IT."

15. SUKHUMPHAN SPEAKS ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY FOR HIMSELF, AND HIS VIEWS DO NOT REPRESENT A MOVEMENT OF ANY SORT. HIS MINIMAL ROLE HAS BEEN TO ACT AS A GADFLY TO STIMULATE AT LEAST SOME CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES WITHIN THE ESTABLISHMENT. NEVERTHELESS, BECAUSE OF THE ABSENCE OF PUBLIC DEBATE RATHER THAN OPPOSITION, THERE IS LITTLE UNDERSTANDING OF RTG POLICY, EVEN AT RELATIVELY HIGH LEVELS. UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, HOWEVER, THE RTG MAY HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO BE MORE FORTHCOMING IN EXPLAINING ITS POLICY AS THE EXTENT OF THAI INVOLVEMENT BECOMES MORE OBVIOUS.

16. ON BALANCE WE SEE LITTLE IMMEDIATE THREAT TO THE RTG'S CAMBODIA POLICY IN THIS CONCERN OVER RECENT

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DEVELOPMENTS OR LACK OF POPULAR ENTHUSIASM FOR
SUPPORTING THE RESISTANCE. THE RTS MAY HAVE A MORE
DIFFICULT TIME, IF IN THE FUTURE, IT IS REQUIRED TO GAIN
POPULAR SUPPORT FOR ITS ACTIVE ROLE IN THE CAMBODIA
CONFLICT. DEAN

END OF MESSAGE

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